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ABSTRACT

An informal non-credit course in anxiety management offered by the author is described. The primary emphasis of this course is on self-hypnosis. Participating students are encouraged to increase their skills in relaxing and concentrating by three methods: (1) eye fixation; (2) muscular relaxation; and (3) focusing of awareness. Other techniques can be used by participants to relax more deeply; however, the techniques usually emphasize an imaginary situation in which the participant feels pleasant, comfortable, and relaxed. Participating students are encouraged to gain greater self-control by use of the Premark Principle, Contingency Management, and the RIPE Formula. The emphasis is upon bodily relaxation, imaginary situations in which the student sees himself or herself as being successful in a selected task, and reinforcing those behaviors which are "good." Also emphasized were interpersonal relationship techniques in which it is demonstrated to others that an adult-adult relationship will be sincerely, warmly, and firmly maintained. (Author/BW)

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Anxiety Management Training Through Self-Hypnosis*

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Since 1965, the UW Division of Counseling and Testing has provided instruction to students who are interested in learning techniques of self-hypnosis. A class paper by Newman (1966) and a dissertation study by McInnelly (1966) led to the development of a booklet (1966) entitled, "A Student Guide to Self-Hypnosis." The booklet offers general information about hypnosis and specific suggestions on the uses of self-hypnosis in academic and personal activities. Also, a tape recording is available for students who wish to come to the Division of Counseling and Testing and use a tape recorder for listening and practicing a variety of induction techniques.

Summary of Program

Encouraged by the program described by Hartman (1969), the writer has presented an informal, non-credit course since the 1969-1970 academic year: one program for undergraduates and one for graduate students. Each program is based upon the same general format: a one and one-half-hour weekly session for any interested student. Students are asked to purchase (at cost) a copy of "A Student Guide to Self-Hypnosis" and to complete a copy of an "Individual Record Form" supplied by the Division of Counseling and Testing. Handout materials, including a copy of the program (Sprinkle, 1972) are supplied to each student. Attendance records are maintained by the instructor for the purpose of evaluating the level of interest in the program. However, no requirements for attendance or performance are maintained. Students are allowed to attend as often as they wish to do so, and interested students who hear of the program are allowed to participate at any time during the Fall and Spring Semester, or Summer Session.

Each session is conducted with similar procedures: a short introduction by the instructor about the purposes and procedures (in those instances when new students are present); a 20-30 minute period of induction techniques, in which students are encouraged to mentally repeat those suggestions being spoken aloud by the insturctor; then, the remaining time is spent in practicing and/or discussing specific techniques, e.g., ideomotor responses (Cheek & LeCron, 1968), for exploration and self-understanding; Kroger's program (1970) for management of obesity, and Cheek and LeCron's approach (1968) to problems of overeating; a modification of Oetting's method (1964), for improving study habits; "directed daydream technique" (Hammer, 1967) and "ego-strengthening" techniques (Hartland, 1971), for attitudinal and assertive training; and methods for meditation and self-development (Logan, 1968).

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During the 1969-70 year, 53 students participated in the programs, including 36 undergraduates and 17 graduate students. The 36 undergraduates showed a range of attendance from 1-11 sessions, with an average of 3 sessions. The 17 graduates showed a range of attendance from 1-12 sessions, with an average of 6 sessions. During the 1970-71 year, 58 undergraduates attended an average of 2.2 sessions; 64 graduate students attended an average of 3.5 sessions; and 10 participants attended an average of 2.7 sessions in the Summer of 1971.

In 1970, in order to evaluate the instructional program, a short questionnaire was sent to 53 students who had participated in one or more sessions. Of the 51 questionnaires which apparently were received, 34 (67%) were completed and returned; 13 of 17 (77%) graduate students returned the form, as did 21 of 36 (59%) undergraduates. The results of tabulating the questionnaires (see Table 1 and Table 2) indicated that the expressed opinions of respondents were more favorable in regard to two items: "The approach and methods of the instructor" and "The techniques and procedures being taught." The least favorable aspect of the program appeared to be item: "The setting; the conditions of the room." Tabulated results and elicited comments indicate that most respondents, especially the graduate students, were generally favorable in their evaluation of the program. It is not known whether non-respondents would offer similar comments; however, it is likely that non-respondents would express less favorable comments about the program.

Anxiety Management and Self-Control

This informal instruction program on self-hypnosis has not been developed with an emphasis upon anxiety management training. However, the writer has noted three conditions which affect anxiety levels of many students: difficulty in resting or relaxing deeply; difficulty in studying or concentrating deeply; and difficulty in gaining self-esteem and self-control. The instructional program is arranged to assist the interested student to learn how to relax more deeply, concentrate more deeply, and gain more self-control; thus, the interested student can learn to control anxiety.

Relaxation and concentration. Participating students are encouraged to increase their skills in relaxing and concentrating by three methods:

Eye fixation--continuing to look at a spot until the eyes are tired or until there is difficulty in focusing on the spot; then allowing the eyelids to close.

Muscular relaxation--allowing the muscles to be "loose and floppy"; maintaining a comfortable position, with feet on the floor and arms in the lap or on the table; being able to shift position if necessary to be more comfortable.

Focusing of awareness--allowing awareness to be focused so that "distractions," or outside stimuli, become internalized, e.g.,"with each click of the typewriter in the next room I can go deeper and deeper, faster and faster."

Table 1

Questionnaire Responses by Undergraduate Students

No. of Respondents = 21 (Total No. attending program = 36)

Aspects of the Program	Harmful	Not Helpful	Sometimes Helpful	Often Helpful	Very Helpful	Total Ss*
"A Student Guide to Self-Hypnosis"- the booklet	0	1	7	4	6	18
The Setting; the conditions of the room	0	4	8	2	5	19
The approach and methods of the instructor	0	0	0	3	16	19
The techniques and procedures being taught	0	0	2	4	12	18
The application of the techniques in daily life	0	0	5	6	7	18
Total ratings	0	5	22	19	46	

*Some respondents did not rate each item of the questionnaire.

Table 2

Questionnaire Responses by Graduate Students

No. of Respondents = 13 (Total No. attending program = 17)

Aspects of the Program	Harmful	Not Helpful	Sometimes Helpful	Often Helpful	Very Helpful	Total Ss
"A Student Guide to Self-Hypnosis"- the booklet	0	0	4	4	4	12*
The setting; the conditions of the room	0	6	2	3	2	13
The approach and methods of the instructor	0	0	0	3	10	13
The techniques and procedures being taught	0	0	2	3	8	13
The application of the techniques in daily life	0	0	6	3	4	13
Total ratings	0	6	14	16	28	

*One student did not respond to this item of the questionnaire.

In order to increase their skill in focusing awareness, participating students are encouraged to repeat mentally the phrases repeated out loud by the instructor, who pauses briefly after each phrase:

> "Relax deeply . . . relax deeply . . . relax deeply . . . . As I relax deeply . . . I can go to a deep stage of concentration . . . . I won't be asleep, I can be alert . . . and I can learn to use these procedures in my own style and my own way . . . so that I can become the kind of person I wish to be, the kind of person I can be . . . . Whenever I wish, I can return to the normal state . . . and whenever I return to the normal state . . . I can always feel wide awake, alert, and refreshed . . . feeling fine and feeling good . . . . Whenever I am alone or whenever it is appropriate . . . I can always return to this deep stage of concentration . . . and I can learn to use these techniques . . . to rest and relax more deeply . . . or to study and to concentrate more deeply . . . or to gain more self-understanding and more self-control.

Using a modification of Jacobson's techniques of relaxation (Jacobson, 1938), students are encouraged to follow these procedures:

> "If you haven't yet closed your eyes, just let your eyelids close and mentally 'look' at parts of your body--as if you can see the bones, ligaments, organs, systems, muscles, and skin. Now, letting parts of the body relax more deeply as you 'look' at your toes and feet, and mentally repeat the phrase, 'Toes and feet, relax . . .' then, 'looking' at your ankles and calves and mentally repeating, 'Ankles and calves, relax.' . . . 'Knees and thighs, relax.' . . . 'Hands and wrists, relax.' . . . 'Arms and shoulders, relax.' . . . 'Hips and torso, (deep breath) relax.' . . . 'Neck and head, relax.' . . . Now, 'looking' throughout all parts of the body; 'seeing' if there are any parts of the body where there is too much tension, stress, or fatigue, e.g., the back of the neck or the shoulders, the forehead, etc. Now, let that deep, drowsy, heavy, comfortable, warm, pleasant, relaxed feeling continue to move throughout the body; easing fatigue, stress, and tension, and letting the entire body experience that pleasant glow."

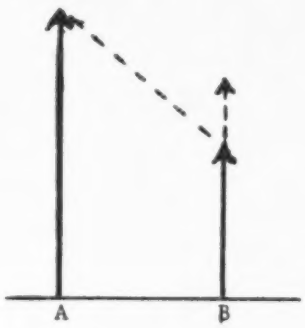
There are many other techniques which can be used by participants to relax more deeply; however, the techniques usually emphasize an imaginary situation in which the participant feels pleasant, comfortable, and relaxed.

Self-Modification of Behavior. Participating students are encouraged to gain greater self-control by use of the Premack Principle, Contingency Management, and the RIPE Formula (see following pages). The emphasis is upon bodily relaxation, imaginary situations in which the student sees himself or herself as being successful in a selected task, and reinforcing those behaviors which are "good." Example: if a student expresses difficulty in controlling anxiety, he is encouraged to learn to relax deeply and to repeat to himself, many times each day, a phrase such as, "I can learn to control my anxiety," followed by a reinforcing behavior, e.g., a sip of coffee, a deep breath, a moment of deep relaxation.

Basic Method for Self-Improvement: Attach "good" consequences to one's own behavior.

Premack Principle*
(Dr. David Premack)

Any response (A) can reinforce any other response (B), provided that A is more likely to occur than B, and provided that B is made contingent upon the occurrence of A.



Responses

(In other words, an "if . . . then" contingency: if B occurs, then A can occur, so that B is reinforced and, thus, occurs more often.)

Based upon his experimental results, Premack (1959, p. 219) concluded: "Reinforcement results when an R of a lower independent rate coincides, within temporal limits, with the stimuli governing the occurrence of an R of a higher independent rate."

Contingency Management (Dr. L. E. Homme)**

One can manage personal behavioral changes by the use of self-contingencies, i.e., the use of "covert operants." (A "covert operant" refers to a "hidden function" or, a "covered act of learning." In much of adult human behavior, there are little self-statements which are quietly spoken or silently repeated to oneself. Homme suggests that these self-statements can be positive, rather than negative, and that the self-statements can be reinforced by use of the Premack Principle.)

In using this method of behavioral change, the individual selects a "covert operant," or a positive self-statement, and he selects a behavior which is a reward or reinforcer; then, he practices contingency management by mentally repeating the positive self-statements just prior to the reinforcing behavior.

Some examples:

Positive Self Statement (covert operant)	Reinforcing Behavior
"I can learn to control my anxiety."	A deep breath.
"I can learn to become a good student." . .	A moment of relaxation.
"I can learn to study more diligently.". . .	Further study.
"I can learn to like myself."	A sip of water or coffee, etc.

The important factor is not whether the positive self-statement is presently "believed"; the important factor is continued practice, based upon the principle of attaching "good consequences" to the desired self-statement. Then, when the statement becomes "believable", the individual can manage contingencies so that his behavior is more consistent with the positive self-statement; i.e., he can "become" the person he wishes to be.

*Premack, D. "Toward empirical behavior laws." The Psychological Review, 1959, 66, 219-233.
**Homme, L. E. "Psychotherapy: a special case of behavioral engineering." Paper presented at the Rocky Mountain Psychological Association convention, May 13, 1966, Albuquerque, N.M.

Summary of Methods for Self-Development

I. The Name of the Game: Personal Change. (The major questions: From which behaviors to which behaviors? Within what situations? By which methods? For what goals and purposes?)

II. ABCD's of Self-Understanding
(Aphorisms, Bromides, Clichés, and Dicta)

A. People are where they "wish to be," psychologically; they are where they "wish to be" for good, moral reasons.

B. The major characteristic of personal mental health is Self-Esteem; this characteristic may be expressed in this self-statement: "I like myself as I am, but I am not satisfied with my achievement."

C. A method of self-understanding involves the assessment of one's personal situation: Problem? or Predicament? (Problem? Solve it! Predicament? Tolerate it, or enjoy it!)

D. The means of self-improvement: selectively reinforce positive self-statements.

III. Self-Development Techniques: Learning how to use the RIPE formula.

RIPE Formula	Possible Extensions of the Techniques		
	Momentarily	Daily	Periodically
R (Relax)	A slow deep breath	Self-Hypnosis	Meditation
I (Imagine)	A thought or feeling	Self-Imagery	Directed Day Dream
P (Practice)	A reinforced behavior	Self-Reinforcement	Contingency Management
E (Evaluate)	A personal assessment	Self-Examination	Creative Suffering

IV. Interpersonal Relationships

A. Demonstrating to others (by thought, word, and deed) that an adult-adult relationship--rather than a parent-child relationship--will be sincerely, warmly, and firmly maintained.

B. Knowing that I cannot force another person to be happy or unhappy--unless the other person cooperates in reaching the goal of happiness or unhappiness.

C. Gaining responsibility for my own attitudes, without expecting others to share those views--unless they choose to do so.

D. Learning how to appreciate the statement by H. S. Sullivan: "Nothing makes living difficult except other people, and one's own inadequacies for dealing with them."

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